wildpear

DAN WILT

HOW TO LEAD WORSHIP

AN 8 WEEK STUDY

WITHOUT BEING A ROCK STAR



SESSION 5

LEADING A WORSHIP BAND

"The more I lead, the more confident I feel. The more experience I have, the more I become aware of what God is saying. In the past, when things have been going badly, my head would go down and I would think, 'Let's just get through this.' I would feel so terrible.

But now, I get more and more desperate for God to do something and I say, 'Lord, what is it you might be wanting to do?'

I am trying to be more eager to hear His voice."[16]

Tim Hughes (*Here I Am To Worship*)

It is always amazing to me how the dynamics related to building an effective worship team are very similar to those related to building a healthy family, a healthy Church, a healthy business or a healthy sports

team. Human beings, as you may have guessed, are the common denominator in all of these equations, and it is in the realm of human relationships that we find the keys to managing healthy relationships in a worship team.

However, I would challenge the language of "team" being the most effective term applied to what is happening among the group of musicians that we call a worship team. While the words are harmless enough, and I don't think we have to change the terms "worship team" or "worship band," let's differentiate between a team and a tribe (or community).

If a team is primarily a functional unit, made up of various participants fulfilling divisions of labor to accomplish a task, then I would contrast this with a tribe or community – a gathering of inter-related members who fulfill responsibilities related to the fulfilling of their shared needs, and the blessing of their shared relationships. A tribe shares a common story, and a common set of values.

To understand your worship team in the sense of "community" or "tribe" may refine your approach to handling the tender matters of relationship and musicianship that come with the territory. First, we'll look at pastoring your tribe, and then we'll look at how we can gel musically.

Building Your Band Relationally & Spiritually

In Galatians 5:22 (NIV), we find a listing of what have been commonly called "the fruits of the Spirit."

> *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."*

These "fruits" are most accurately the character traits of the Holy Spirit, modeled in the life of Jesus, that are meant to be the common traits of those who are filled with the Spirit of God. In other words, the attributes

listed are the surest evidence that God is indeed in our midst, actually present and ruling and reigning in our lives. Personally and corporately, we are to bear the natural fruit that bursts forth from a healthy tree – in this case, the tree of our friendship with God.

In the NIV version of the scriptures, these fruits were listed as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In *The Message* by Eugene Peterson, these words are expanded, and read like this:

> *"But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard – things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely."*[17]

Given that a worship community is a microcosm of the community that is the Church, with defined tasks and functions in the community, we'll apply each of the fruits of the Spirit to the maintenance of healthy relational dynamics among the creative tribe that is your worship community.

How Can We Live These Out In A Band?

We are invited to live out our faith in a time, and in a place. Here are some ideas for how we can live out the fruits of the Spirit among our peers in a band or worship ministry setting.

> ***Love: "affection for others"***
> Model for your team a style of leadership that always has their highest and best interests in mind. When you express love and

affection for your team members, over time, they will begin to show it to one another. When you set up someone's instrument for him or her, or honor that person in front of the band, it will be contagious.

Joy: "exuberance about life"

Make sure that you make time to just play, without your instruments, together. Plato once said that you learn more about someone in an hour of play than in a lifetime of work. Make sure you find space to eat together, have parties together, and to enjoy one another's unique personalities.

Peace: "serenity"

Keep short accounts with one another. Pray for your team, and make sure that any relational conflict is not left to fester, but rather dealt with as lovingly, gently and as quickly as possible.

Patience: "We develop a willingness to stick with things"

In rehearsal, when someone needs to work out their own part, give them time to do so. The other team members may have to show them patience, but that's a good exercise for musicians. Show the team members that you are willing to stick with them as they grow as disciples, and as people.

Kindness: "a sense of compassion in the heart"

Guard your words, and make sure that for every criticism you must give that you have offered at least 10 words of encouragement before that time. Many worship leaders wonder why their band members are so easily offended, when often the worship leader has never learned how to encourage people to the point where individuals can receive input more easily.

Oh, and in case you didn't know it, musicians and creatives tend to be, well… sensitive human beings. Use the fruit of kindness

frequently, and empathize with the needs of each of your bandmates.

Goodness: "a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people"
If you treat each person as someone made in the image of God, and as valuable, they will stick with you and serve as best they can for a long time to come. Affirm people by calling them up to the goodness of Christ within them, and don't let them fall down to their lowest expectations of themselves.

Faithfulness: "We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments"
Many musicians struggle with being faithful, dependable and consistent. Help your musicians learn to "stick with it," and remind them that loyalty to Jesus and to one another is a high calling. Call people up on coming late or disrespecting others' time schedules when it harms or dishonors others.

Gentleness: "not needing to force our way in life"
Teach your team to see the stage or platform as a vehicle to bring fame to God – not to themselves. If they see you calmly walking through life, trusting God without pushing for your own agenda, they may awake to the reality that they don't need to push you or others to give them visibility or platform.

Self Control: "able to marshal and direct our energies wisely"
Ask God to enable you to call out the full potential of each band member. Help them to focus their energies and avoid "scattered living." When certain areas of sin are acknowledged by a person, you can help them to walk the journey away from those areas as a mentor, intercessor and friend.

It is our ability to value one another, in the midst of laughter and labor, which makes a worship team into a true worship

community, a true Kingdom tribe in the family of God.

Building Your Band Musically

Bringing your band together musically can be an entirely different matter than bringing them together spiritually. Hear these words from worship leader Bruce Ellis:

> *"From a musical perspective, a worship team presents an interesting dilemma. Firstly, this is probably the only context where such a diverse group of musicians are gathered together and expected to produce a sound suitable for mass consumption.*
>
> *A worship team can, and often does, represent a wide mix of musical abilities and strengths – from the seasoned professional to those who have just learned a few chords. Since musicians naturally tend to gravitate toward those who share similar levels of ability, this integration can, if not kept in perspective, have some devastating effects on the worship team experience.*
>
> *Factor in that many pastors, too often, closely correlate church growth with the worship team's sound and you've got a breeding ground for division and contempt. That's the bad news.*
>
> *The good news is that we can have confidence in the wonderful way God has both called us to, and provided the means by which, we can interact on both a spiritual and a musical level. If this sounds a lot like the Kingdom of God to you, you can rest in knowing... it is!"*[18]

Here are just a few tips to keep your band growing and working well together musically:

> *Allow time for band members to work out their parts for a particular song.*

In rehearsal, it's important for a musician to feel like they are contributing their best. Aid this by giving them the songs you'll be leading earlier in the week (so they can work out their parts), and by allowing them to fine tune their part during a rehearsal.

Make sure you are all in tune (maybe to the same tuner).

Don't be proud about your ability to tune your instrument without a tuner. Most of the time, especially when playing with other musicians, it creates just enough sonic tension to make the music sound bad.

Every band should have a tuner they share around, and every musician should be humble enough to tune to it for the good of the band and the congregation – without having to be asked.

Give your team CDs to practice to well before they will do the songs in rehearsal.

While you never want your band simply mimicking CDs without ever catching the heart behind a song, CDs are a great learning tool for musicians (even professionals). I use an online planner to get the songs to all my musicians in a fast and easy way.

Drummers are pushed to play to the beat of a pro drummer, and to stay in time with the band who recorded in the studio. When the recorded songs are used for learning, electric guitarists are forced to play less, along with the guitarist on the recording, and to try new sounds.

Vocalists learn new harmonies, keyboard players learn new sounds and textures, and worship leaders learn how to play their

instrument to the actual tempo of the song!

Encourage, and even supply, lessons when possible.

This is all part of making your musicians feel like a valuable part of the team. When you can supply workshops for individual instruments, or send a musician for a few lessons with someone they admire, do it. Pick your investments wisely, and do all you can to encourage the musician in a craft they've been working on for years.

Expose them to greatness on their instrument.

If possible, have your band go to events together where great musicians are playing. Encourage them to watch what the players are doing, how little they are playing or how well they are blending in. The more you inspire your musicians, the more they will seek learning opportunities themselves.

Be brutally honest, and keep short accounts.

Being shy with musicians, while desirable in the short run, often leads to problems later. Be honest with where a musician is at, musically, spiritually or relationally. While not being overly-critical, extend love and grace in honest conversation about where a person is headed as a Christian (or as a musician).

When love has ruled the day before, most musicians I know are eager for honest input.

Put like-abilities together.

If you have a few great musicians, give them plenty of opportunity to play together and be inspired by each other. If you only put learning musicians with your best musicians, the latter will get frustrated along the way.

If a few musicians are growing together, have them play together and inspire one another to greater heights. Then, on occasion, mix the teams to create mentoring relationships. In some case, have younger musicians "shadow," or play in the background with, your better musicians.

Rehearse well before you play.

Never apologize for rehearsing your band thoroughly, and for doing your best to create music that is beautiful together. Beautiful music facilitates worship; bad music distracts and disturbs people's interaction with God. The more rehearsed a band is together, the less they need to go over every little detail before an event.

"Top and Tail" songs for quick rehearsals.

When there is little time to rehearse even familiar songs, "top and tail" the songs. In other words, practice how you will get into each song, how you will finish each song, and then how you will start the next song after it, and so on. This is a quick way to rehearse when time is short.

Obey the "Fraction Principle."

Brian Doerksen, well-known worship leader and songwriter, emphasizes the reality that the sound of every band should equal "1." In other words, if there are 7 people playing in the band, each band member only plays 1/7 of what they could play if they were on their own.

If each band member overplays, the sound ends up equaling 7 – a wall of busy sound will overwhelm the listener, and is closer to noise than it is music! If we each add our small part, making way for the other instruments in the band, we'll play less, and more simply, than we would on our own.

This is part of maturing as a musician, and as a band. The most professional of players and bands understand, and intuitively obey, this principle.[19]

Use the phrase "Downbeat Time."

When calling your band to show up early for a rehearsal, use the language of "Downbeat Time" for that rehearsal. In other words, "Downbeat Time is 6:00 pm," means that everyone's gear should be set up, and ready to hit the "downbeat" on rehearsal at 6 pm. So, if the electric guitar player knows they have gear to set up, they come at 5:30 pm so they are ready for the first "downbeat" on the rehearsal at 6.

This simple language change has helped hundreds of teams communicate more clearly, and get in full, effective rehearsals with their band.

See Your Team As A Group Of Spiritual Leaders

Finally, let me emphasize the extreme importance of seeing your team as a group of spiritual leaders who play music, not just musicians who have a role in the spiritual life of your church.

Consider investing in their long-term training – as musicians, disciples and spiritual leaders. WorshipTraining.com (an online training site I founded and designed with others for this very purpose) is just one powerful mechanism for creating a full development track of courses for all your worship ministry members. Other resources are available as well – take advantage of them.

Your team is so worth it.

Session 5
Reflection Questions

First, if you are doing this with a group, take some time to write in your answers to the following questions before you gather. Highlight page numbers, key quotes and ideas that moved you. Make sure you write in the margins, circle words, or anything that will help you interact with the material and remember core ideas.

1. What ideas moved you the most from this section?

    Talk about the ideas related to worship that particularly moved you during your reading.

    How might the ideas that moved you help all of us to understand what worship is really all about?

2. What did you learn that you could apply to leading your team?

    What principles of leading your team would you immediately apply after having read this section?

3. Talk about the *Fraction Principle*. How does it apply to your setting?

    The Fraction Principle, all of us sounding as "1" in a band setting, changes the way individual musicians play. How could this principle apply in the current setting where you lead worship?